

- 135 -

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

An image processing apparatus includes a maximum/minimum density detecting unit which detects a center pixel of a matrix of  $N \times N$  pixels in image data that has a maximum or minimum density. A  
5 determination unit determines whether the absolute value of a difference between an average of densities of diagonal pixels of the matrix and a density of the center pixel is larger than a threshold value. A peak pixel detecting unit detects peak pixels of the matrix, each peak pixel being the center pixel having a maximum or  
10 minimum density, and the absolute value of the difference with respect to the center pixel being larger than the threshold value. A dot region detecting unit detects one of neighboring pixels of the matrix as being a dot region based on the number of the peak pixels in a target region and the number of the peak pixels in each of  
15 neighboring regions.

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